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DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused January 5-7 news coverage on Taiwan's faltering relations with Malawi; on the upcoming legislative elections and the March presidential poll; on Taiwan's sagging economy; and on the U.S. presidential candidates. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" called on Washington to recognize clearly China's evil ambition and to support "democratic" Taiwan in holding the UN referendum. An op-ed in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed Taiwan's diplomatic ties with Malawi and other allies. The article said more allies likely will terminate diplomatic relations with Taiwan, because they see Washington's severe criticism of Taiwan's UN referendum and thus believe that Washington no longer supports Taiwan. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" compared U.S. President George W. Bush and Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian and urged the voters to be careful when they cast their ballots in March, 2008. End summary.

A) "The United States Should Recognize Clearly China's Nature and Maintain Common Interests between Taipei and Washington"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (1/5/08):

"... The U.S. government has been imposing quite a lot of political pressure on Taiwan lately due to certain policy disputes [between the two]; it has even decided not to consider selling the F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan for the time being. The political pressure imposed by Washington on Taipei is exactly what China, which seeks to 'win over the United States to restrain Taiwan,' is happy to see. In the face of China's increasing military threats against Taiwan, the [U.S.] failure to sell defensive weapons to Taiwan in a timely manner might send the wrong signal to China, namely: is the United States wavering in terms of its strategic deployment in the Western Pacific?

"Ever since our country started to push for the UN referendum, China has said implicitly and explicitly many times that the move will increase military tension. Even Hu Jintao did not hesitate to say that the People's Liberation Army's only job is to engage in a war with Taiwan. China's saber-rattling toward Taiwan was an empty threat most of the time, but it is an indisputable fact that the military balance across the Taiwan Strait has been tipping in favor of China over the past few years, thus increasing the risks of China attacking Taiwan. This is a development that we must keep vigilant about, and the United States must also not lower its guard, either.

"At this moment, it is particularly noteworthy to remind [everyone] of the U.S. policy unveiled in the 'Taiwan Relations Act:' Namely, [it is the policy of the United States] to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States. It also includes 'providing Taiwan with arms of a

defensive character.' Such a policy has been honored by the U.S. administrations since then and has been supported by relevant countries, because it meets the common interests of all relevant countries. ...

"Over the past few years, China has been shouting out loud such slogans as 'peaceful rise' and 'harmonious world,' but in reality, its defense budget has been growing at a two-digit rate, and its hidden defense budget has even reached double or three times the budget made public. Beijing's attempts to have its submarines trespass in the territorial waters of Taiwan and Japan, to stalk the USS Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier, and to test-fire its satellite killer missiles, have all highlighted China's expanding military buildup, indicating its evil ambition to annex Taiwan and its long-term scheme to challenge the United States and Japan. China's military expansion is exactly a provocative move seeking to alter the status quo across the Taiwan Strait. Given Washington's and Tokyo's opposition to, or lack of support for, democratic Taiwan's fundamental human rights in holding the UN referendum in a peaceful way, it is no wonder that people doubt the true intent of these countries."

B) "Watch out for the Next Malawi!"

John Feng, Taiwan's former ambassador to the Dominican Republic, opined in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (1/6):

"Reports said recently that Malawi, Taiwan's major ally in Africa, is about to establish diplomatic ties with China. In the meantime, Taiwan's relations with its allies in Central America - Panama, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic - are also reportedly in danger. Taiwan now maintains diplomatic relations with twenty-four countries, including Vatican City, the Holy See. The twenty-three countries maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan either because

of Taiwan's economic aid for them or because of indirect pressure from the United States. ...

"Half of Taiwan's allies are located in Central America, the backyard of the United States. When these countries negotiated with China about building diplomatic ties in order to get more economic aid, they are clearly aware that the United States supports Taiwan in principle, and it does not want to see China's hands reach out to its backyard. They do not dare to act recklessly, because they don't want to offend the United States. ... Washington has many times expressed its displeasure with Taiwan's holding the UN referendum; it even had Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice come forth to severely slam the move as a 'provocative' act. In the eyes of Taiwan's allies, [such a move] indicated that the United States no longer supports Taiwan so much. As a result, the 'U.S. factor' in diplomatic relations between Taiwan and its allies is wavering as well. ... "

C) "U.S., Taiwan Voters, Remember 2004"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (1/5):

"On the last day of 2007, the New York Times ran an editorial saying: 'we can only hope that this time, unlike 2004, American voters will have the wisdom to grant the awesome powers of the presidency to someone who has the integrity, principle and decency to use them honorably.' Oh, what was the Times was talking about? Was it talking about Taiwan? Because no other words could have possibly described the situation in Taiwan so vividly. ...

"In fact, Bush's contempt for international law and the U.S. Constitution is only one aspect of Bush's failed leadership. He has led the world's wealthiest and most powerful country to an impasse, both in Iraq and Afghanistan. His war on terror has already cost US\$800 billion and 3,800 American lives. He is accountable for his miscalculation on Iraq, which he invaded for no other reasons than oil (even former Fed chairman Alan Greenspan said so). What has Bush accomplished in his seven years in the White House? He has spent the United States into debt by fighting an increasingly unpopular war which is also certain to cost the ruling GOP's grip on power. President Bush is all but sure to go down in history as one

of the worst American presidents.

"The same fate is awaiting our President Chen Shui-bian, also re-elected in 2004 by a razor-thin margin of 0.2 percent with the help of 'two mysterious bullets.' Like Bush, A-bian is obsessed with ideology and is as combative. Unlike Bush, however, A-bian is implicated in corruption cases involving his family and top aides. He was the target of a massive 'dump A-bian' protest in 2006 that almost toppled his presidency. So, his integrity is marred and bankrupt. How about principles? Can he be trusted with his words and promises? Just look at what has happened to his solemn 'four noes' pledge he made to the world in his inaugural address in 2000. Now, these commitments are nothing but a joke. He has proved that he can be fickle. ..."

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